

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

February 28, 1991



Changing Of The Guard At MDA

Former U.S. Rep. Bill Schuette was appointed director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture by the new Michigan Ag Commission in January. We recently had an opportunity to talk with MDA's new director about his first month in office and about current and future issues that Michigan's agricultural industry will face.

Q. How will Bill Schuette's MDA be different from previous administration's?

A. We have a new Ag Commission, at least 4/5 of it, and a very talented fifth person. Policy decisions are made based on commission direction. The key thing, fortunately for Michigan farmers, is that we have a commission and a director who share the same philosophy.

Our Ag Commission is really a reflection of the diversity of Michigan agriculture. This is a first class team and I will try to be a positive addition to that team. The way I look at it, we've got a tremendous team pulling in the same direction for Michigan agriculture.

Q. What is the priority issue facing Michigan agriculture?

A. Right-to-Farm is the key issue for Michigan Agriculture in terms of growth. There are other important issues out there such as trade and value added processing and I'm not trying to isolate them. But issues such as groundwater and pesticides all fall into the Right-to-Farm discussion. The whole point is reason and balance. We all have a stake in the environment, both farmers and non-farmers.

Q. In regards to Right-to-Farm, what additional responsibilities do you foresee for MDA?

A. Right-to-Farm policy guidelines are under review and recommendations will be made to the Ag Commission. They have the right to change, stop, modify or reject those recommendations if they choose. It's fair to say that this department's role is to be an advocate for agriculture.

With respect to right to farm, we're not a law enforcement agency. There aren't going to be agricultural cops knocking about the country side. However, this department is not a safe haven. It doesn't provide sanctuary or a shield to polluters and bad actors that do harm to the environment.

The role of this department, said in a positive way, is to help educate and give recommendations to farmers and business people about what are generally accepted farming practices, guidelines or suggestions. Between the two extremes, there is a lot of room and controversy.

Q. Do you see the scope of Right-to-Farm being expanded to include areas such as pesticides, ag labor housing, etc.?

A. Currently, guidelines for pesticides and for fertilizers are pending pursuant to statute. And a fourth is being worked on in the animal care category. Every piece of agricultural legislation has an environmental side to it, and that's important. The point is, however, that farmers have a right to farm and they're not going to need a permit to farm - not from me.

Q. Are there any efforts underway to develop groundwater protection legislation or regulations?

A. I think this will be a subject of legislative discussion throughout the course of this year. It's an important issue in Michigan considering we have 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply. The non-point source pollution and how you deal

with it is a critical issue for this department. We are going to take a strong positive, pro-active environmental role here, because it's important regardless of your occupation.

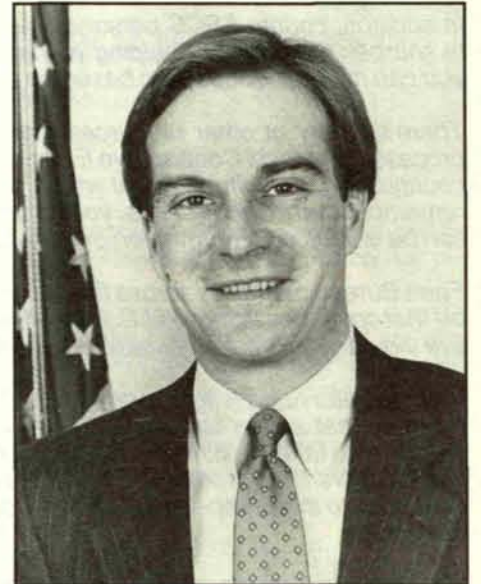
Q. What percentage of the MDA budget must be cut?

A. For fiscal 1991, we have a 9.2 percent across the board cut. Those are tough decisions for me and tough decisions for the governor. I happen to feel the governor is right on target. The state needs to go to the shop for major overhaul. We have got to live within our means and we need a property tax reduction.

That's important for growth in this state. We grow a wide variety of crops and then ship them across the state line for the final value added component in many respects. We ought to be having more value added processing here in the state. To make that attractive, we need an environment that encourages economic growth.

In fiscal year 1992, there may be cuts in the 10 to 15 percent range for MDA. Throughout these budget reductions, my whole focus, in the imperfect world, in a climate of spending reductions and down sizing state government, will be on the regulatory side.

To maintain the integrity of the food chain from the field to the store, we are going to try to minimize the impact to the food safety functions of this department. We have the responsibility to maintain the full con-



fidence and integrity of the food chain for consumers and farmers alike.

Q. Where and how will those budget cuts be made?

A. With an eye toward protecting the regulatory side, that means cuts in the non-regulatory side of things. After a thorough review of division heads and hearing from people then, I'll try to use my best judgment. Because of the dollars and cents concerns, we're going to have to eliminate the Michigan Family Farm Development Division, for example.

See "Schuette," continued on page 5

Too Much Federal Emphasis On Wetlands

The federal government's recent emphasis on wetlands has placed them above all other natural resources or economic uses to the detriment of agriculture, the American Farm Bureau recently told a House Small Business Committee.

The current regulatory interpretation of President Bush's goal of "no net loss" of wetlands has resulted in a new federal program that is out of balance, according to Al Almy, director of public affairs for Michigan Farm Bureau.

"Why not no net loss of hardwood forests, prime farmland or beaches?" he said. "Natural resource policy should seek to balance all competing ecological, social and economic needs in a given situation."

In January of 1989, the four federal agencies involved in wetlands regulations adopted the Federal Manual for the Delineation of Jurisdictional Wetlands.

"This was done without notice and opportunity for public comment or congressional oversight," Almy said. "Nevertheless, this new manual brought 60 million acres of cropland under regulation as waters of the

United States by expanding the definition of a wetland. There now exists a federal definition of wetlands that includes a great deal of land that no one would ever recognize or consider to be a wetland. This is having a profound effect on farmland values and overall economic growth."

Almy also said Farm Bureau believes several changes to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act are needed to correct these problems including:

1. A definition of exactly what kind of wetlands constitute prior converted wetlands.
2. A specific exclusion from regulation for all prior converted wetlands.
3. A clear definition of what constitutes normal farming practices. Farm Bureau suggests allowing land grant universities and the Extension Service to establish a list of normal farming practices that allow for regional and agronomic variations.
4. A recognition of private property rights and a process for compensating landowners for lost use of their property.
5. A system of classifying wetlands that recognizes that not all wetlands have the same value or provide the same functions.

EPA And Corp Of Engineers Retreat On "Prior Converted Cropland"

You may recall a Corp of Engineers announcement last September to exempt prior converted croplands from wetlands provisions of the Clean Water Act -- well, almost. The EPA and Army Corp of Engineers recently released their interpretation of prior converted croplands.

The memorandum defines agricultural commodities as "any annual crop planted by tilling of the soil, or sugar cane." It continues, "Perennial crops are not agricultural commodities. For example, grass hay, alfalfa hay, turf, cranberries, blueberries, apples and other trees are not agricultural commodities."

The memorandum also states that to remain classified as prior converted cropland, the land must be planted to an annual crop at least one year out of five. Therefore, the manual states, "use of an area for hay or pasture for more than five consecutive years is not considered production of an agricultural commodity."

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Farm Program: Complex, but Necessary

Farmers across the state this month are sharpening their pencils to figure out how they will participate in this year's new farm program. The decision making process is as complex as it's ever been. A recent USDA survey indicated that considerable confusion still exists regarding the new farm bill, especially the new flexibility features of the package. To assist you, this issue of the "Michigan Farm News" has a 1991 farm program worksheet found on page six.

In addition, county ASCS personnel have completed regional training workshops to sharpen their skills in helping you with the complexities of the program, so that you can make your decision based on solid and accurate information.

There's plenty of other resources available to help you in your decision making process. Your local Cooperative Extension Service office has materials and, in most counties, an agricultural agent who is very familiar with the farm program. Finally, remember that in many cases, your Farm Bureau staff on the county and state level can be a source of information and advice.

Farm Bureau members across the nation played a major role in drafting a 1990 farm bill that continues to move U.S. agriculture toward a market-based, export-competitive industry, a direction established by the 1985 farm bill.

Farm Bureau has a long and consistent history in support of a market-oriented farm program that allows farmers to rely more on markets and less on government. It allows us to take maximum advantage of market opportunities at home and abroad and it allows farm production decisions based on true market demand. One only need look to the European Economic Community as an example of a farm program run amuck.

The farm program is complicated. But, thanks to Farm Bureau's policy development and execution process, the philosophy behind it is sound. Your participation in Farm Bureau will help guarantee that future farm policy will continue to benefit farmers.

Jack Laurie
Jack Laurie, President
Michigan Farm Bureau

In Brief...

USDA Sees Planting Increases

A special USDA report on farmers' planting intentions indicates larger acreages in corn, soybeans, sorghum, oats, barley and sunflowers, but a reduction in spring wheat plantings.

The USDA predicted a 14 percent drop in acreage of spring planted wheat, except for durum, which will be planted on 1 percent more acres than a year ago. The estimates for wheat acreages call for 3.6 million acres of durum and 14 million for other spring wheat.

Large increases in acres planted are forecast for sunflowers, sorghum and cotton, 36, 19, and 18 percent respectively. A 14 percent increase in acreage planted to oats and 11 percent more for barley are also predicted.

Corn plantings of 77.5 million acres will be an increase of only 4 percent and soybean acreage is estimated to rise only 1 percent at 58.5 million acres. The survey did not include winter wheat seedings, which were reported previously to be 51 million acres, off 10 percent from a year earlier.

The survey, conducted the last two weeks of January, showed confusion exists in regard to the 1990 farm program, particularly the flexibility provisions. No state-by-state breakdowns were published.

Small Grains Approved Cover on Set Aside Acreage

According to a recent AFBF report, several inquiries have been made as to whether small grains will be allowed as an approved cover crop on set-aside acreage. The ASCS in Washington D.C. has responded that wheat and other small grains will continue to be allowed as an approved cover crop.

Apparently, confusion existed as to whether or not small grains would be allowed as a cover under the new 1990 farm bill. After training meetings held for state ASCS personnel, clarification of the misunderstanding should be forthcoming.

Producers may want to keep in mind that while there will be cost sharing available for legumes and grasses seeded as the cover crop, such cost sharing will not be available for small grains planted as the cover crop.

FmHA Predicts Decline In Delinquent Loans

The Farmers Home Administration has identified over 90,000 delinquent borrowers, about 15,000 more than it had in early 1990, however, the agency looks for the number of troubled loans to decline this year as farmers continue their recovery from the crisis of the mid-1980s. FmHA said it wrote off 7,700 loans worth \$900 million in fiscal 1989, but in 1990 that number dwindled to 4,633 with a value of about \$600 million.

Debt "write-downs," in which FmHA excuses a portion of debt to help troubled farmers to get back on their feet financially, also dropped off from 7,600 in 1989 to around 3,784 in fiscal 1990, the agency said.

Michigan Horse Council Expo 1991

The Michigan Horse Council's Expo 1991, scheduled for March 15, 16, and 17 at the Lansing Civic Center, has something for every horse enthusiast, including a trade show, live stallion exhibits and workshops.

Workshops include: Animal Welfare: Why Should You Care; Zoning and the Right-to-Farm Act; Nutrition for the Pleasure Horse: Feeding, Forage and Fact; How To Make Your Horse Road Safe; Trails in Michigan; The World of Mules; The Myth of the Male Line; Dressage - Anyone Can Do It; What Are Reining Horses? Do You Have One?

Expo general admission (\$5 adults, \$2 children under 12) includes all seminars and special events. For more information, call **Convention Management Services, Inc. (517) 495-2309, Ann Louise Budd (517) 676-4171 or Bev Grunheid (313) 437-1525.**

Animal Welfare Seminar Planned

Farmers across mid-Michigan will have an opportunity to learn about the seriousness of animal rightist's agendas, as well as their own responsibilities and rights, at a seminar scheduled for March 26, 1991, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The seminar will be held at Connor's Supper Club, located 2 miles west of Mecosta on M-20 in Mecosta County.

Michigan's yet to be released Right to Farm guidelines on animal welfare will be reviewed by Dr. William Bickert, agricultural engineering professor at Michigan State University. Dr. Michael Chaddock, state veterinarian, will also review the guidelines from a regulatory standpoint.

A buffet lunch is included with the \$6 registration fee which is required by March 20 and can be made by calling the **Mecosta County CES office at (616) 592-0792.**

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As of this issue FPC has scheduled the following dates:

MARCH		APRIL	
1-29	FPC Cassopolis	4-6	FPC Hart
18-20	FPC Sandusky	5	FPC Comstock Park
19-21	FPC Linwood	5-6	FPC Emmett
21	FPC Mt. Pleasant	8-2	FPC Traverse City
		12-13	FPC Jonesville

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FARM ANIMAL/RESEARCH FACILITIES PROTECTION ACT

Status: Plans are being formulated for the reintroduction of the Farm Animal and Research Facilities Protection Act, the so called "break-in bill," and is identical to S. 727 introduced in the last Congress. Sponsor, Sen. Heflin, has indicated that he won't include farm animals in the Senate version in an attempt to move the bill to the floor without hearings and have it considered by unanimous request. Sen. Heflin has promised to support inclusion of farm animals in the bill once it's in conference with the House version.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau will concentrate efforts on a similar bill introduced by Rep. Stenholm in the House. This bill makes it a federal crime and prescribes penalties in concert with current federal law if an individual or group uses interstate commerce to break into, vandalize or steal from a farm, agricultural or biomedical research facility. The Stenholm bill is compatible with the Heflin bill, and the package would send a strong signal to those considering disrupting animal agriculture or research.

Farm Bureau Contact: Al Almy, extension 2040.

HEALTH INSURANCE TAX DEDUCTION

Status: The current 25 percent tax deduction on health insurance premiums for self-employed persons who also provide health insurance to their employees will expire Sept. 30, 1991. House Resolution 784, introduced in the U.S. House by Rep. Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota), would expand the 25 percent deduction to 50 percent in 1994 and expand it to a full 100 percent in 1996 permanently.

A complicating factor in winning enactment of the bill is the pay-as-you-go provision of the 1990 Budget Bill. That provision requires that a measure deemed to be a revenue loser, such as the health insurance tax deduction, must be offset with a decrease in spending or an increase in revenue elsewhere.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports giving self-employed persons a tax deduction for the full cost of health insurance premiums but opposes requiring self-employed persons who take the tax deduction to provide health insurance to employees.

Farm Bureau Contact: Al Almy, extension 2040.

WASHINGTON LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR

The 120 Michigan Farm Bureau members attending the Washington Legislative Seminar on March 5-8 will concentrate on three priority issues in discussions with legislators including: private property rights; health insurance tax deduction for self-employed persons; and federal regulation of wetlands. The issues were reviewed in depth during the briefing meetings held throughout the state for seminar participants.

Farm Bureau Contact: Al Almy, extension 2040.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Status: U.S. Rep. George Gekas (R-PA) has introduced legislation to release the \$17 billion balance in the Highway Trust Fund to modernize the country's roads and bridges. The Trust Fund money includes \$9.7 billion in the highway account and \$7.3 billion in the mass transit account, which is used, and has been used, to mask the true size of the federal deficit.

Legislation to take the Highway Trust Fund off budget is not a new idea. The House voted on a similar measure last year, which was narrowly defeated. Since the Federal Highway-Aid program must be reauthorized this year, many feel now may be the time to resolve the issue of Highway Trust money and the issue of how it's used to offset the federal deficit.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports taking the trust fund "off budget." Since the new 5-cent per gallon gasoline tax imposed by Congress last year is, for the first time, being used for purposes other than road and bridge construction, maintenance and safety, now is the time to spend the trust fund money on what it was originally intended for.

Farm Bureau Contact: Al Almy, extension 2040.

AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEE INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING

Status: U.S. Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) has introduced H.R. 924 to repeal the mandatory income tax withholding requirements for agricultural employees. The requirement was included in the 1989 budget reconciliation bill, and was the object of Farm Bureau's effort to repeal it last year. Although a similar bill had 88 co-sponsors in the last Congress, no action was taken in the House Ways and Means Committee, the committee of jurisdiction.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports H.R. 924

Farm Bureau Contact: Al Almy, extension 2040.

EXPORT ENHANCEMENT CAP REMOVAL

Status: Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, has introduced legislation calling on the Bush administration to lift the spending cap on the export bonus program. The Senate has yet to vote on the resolution, according to Dole aides.

Urging lawmakers not to "disarm while the competition reloads," Dole offered the resolution, which asks the administration to lift the \$425-million cap placed on the program as part of the fiscal 1990 budget pact. The export bonus program was created in 1985 to combat the use of farm export subsidies by the European Economic Community.

Says Dole, "The European Community is busting the bank to subsidize its agricultural products. If we don't play to win, America will be blown off the playing field."

TAX EXPENDITURES

Status: A House task force will study and possibly identify ways to increase state revenues by eliminating some state tax expenditures which now exceed \$6.5 billion annually.

Tax expenditures include revenue the state gives back to or does not collect from taxpayers because of various exemptions, deductions and credits. With state revenues declining and the budget shortfall, tax expenditures are being analyzed for validity, purpose, and benefit.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau will evaluate all specific recommendations to determine the impact on agriculture.

Farm Bureau Contact: Ron Nelson, extension 2043.

PROPERTY TAX REFORM

Status: With over 30 bills to address property tax reform, the Headlee proposal and the governor's proposal to reduce property tax on school operating by 20 percent are two proposals of major discussion.

Property taxes in Michigan generate approximately \$8 billion annually and are used primarily for school operating budgets. Property tax reduction impacts schools, counties and townships and loss of revenues to those entities could have serious consequences.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau has not taken a position on a property tax reform proposal but supports greater state funding of school operating expenses to achieve a 50/50 local and state funding ratio.

Farm Bureau Contact: Ron Nelson, extension 2043.

MDA DOWNSIZING AND REORGANIZATION

Status: The Dept. of Agriculture is downsizing and reorganizing due to a reduced state budget translating to cutbacks in programs and staffing, including transfer of some promotional and international marketing activities to the Dept. of Commerce.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau opposes cuts in the Dept. of Agriculture when disproportionate to other department budget cuts. When cuts are necessary, selective rather than across the board cuts must be allowed to protect key areas such as food safety, weights and measures, marketing and bargaining and other programs which directly affect the safety of the food supply or agricultural economic stability.

Farm Bureau Contact: Ron Nelson, extension 2043.

MICHIGAN PREMIUM PROGRAM

Status: Rep. Niederstadt (D-Sag.) has introduced H.B. 4003, a reintroduction of a bill from the last legislative session, to allow designating premium food produced, handled and distributed under criteria developed by the agricultural industry. The bill would assure consumers of high quality and offers producers potentially higher prices for quality product.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports H.B. 4003.

Farm Bureau Contact: Ron Nelson, extension 2043.

O.R.V. LEGISLATION

Status: The House has approved H.B. 4010 to establish a state off-road vehicle (ORV) policy. The bill creates an ORV trail improvement fund from ORV fees and would be used for additional trails, increased law enforcement, restoration of damage and posting designated trails on state lands as open for ORV use.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports H.B. 4010 and is seeking Senate approval.

Farm Bureau Contact: Vicki Pontz, extension 2046.

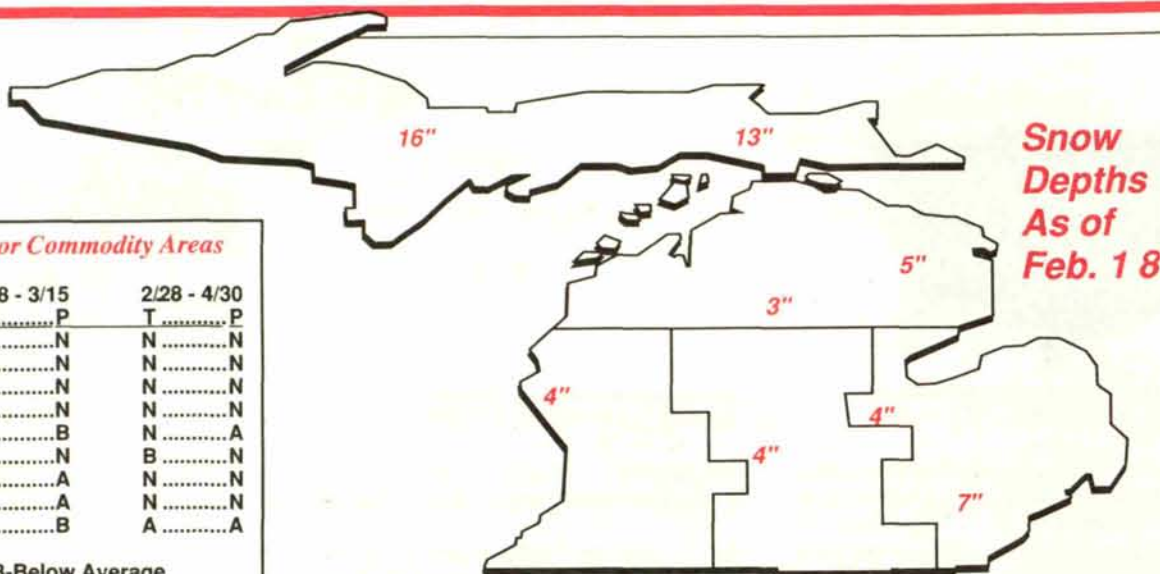
HAZARDOUS SPILL LEGISLATION

Status: The House Conservation, Recreation and Environment Committee has approved legislation to develop a statewide hazardous substance spill prevention program by June 1, 1992. Under H.B. 4011, the D.N.R. would consult the departments of Public Health, Agriculture, State Police and Transportation, and the U.S. Coast Guard, in setting up the program.

H.B. 4012 creates a 24-hour Michigan Spills Action Center established by the State Police in conjunction with the D.N.R. and the Dept. of Public Health. The spills center would take reports of any spills, provide technical advice on emergency responses, compile information on the history of the spill, relay reports of spills to other agencies which under law must receive the information, and coordinate state assistance as needed. The spills center, supported by a new fund, would begin operations when a total of \$2 million is accumulated either through legislative appropriations, gifts or grants, or from federal or local government sources. It is uncertain when the spills center would actually become operational.

Farm Bureau Position: Farm Bureau supports a provision of H.B. 4012 which provides one phone number to be called when a spill occurs as opposed to the current system of contacting various agencies depending on the nature of the spill. Farm Bureau sought clarifying amendments to insure that the spill prevention program is approved by the Legislature before being adopted.

Farm Bureau Contact: Vicki Pontz, extension 2046.



Snow Depths As of Feb. 18

Outlooks For Major Commodity Areas

T - Temp.	2/28 - 3/15	2/28 - 4/30
P - Precip.	T.....P	T.....P
W. Corn Belt	N.....N	N.....N
E. Corn Belt	N.....N	N.....N
Wint. Wheat Belt	N.....N	N.....N
Spr. Wheat Belt	N.....N	N.....N
Pac. NW Wheat	N.....B	N.....A
Delta	N.....N	B.....N
Southeast	N.....A	N.....N
West Texas	A.....A	N.....N
San Joaquin	A.....B	A.....A

A-Above Average, B-Below Average, N-Normal, MA-Much Above, MB-Much Below, NP-No Precip.

For 2/1/91 to 2/15/91	Temperature		Dev. From Normal	Precipitation	
	Avg. Max.	Avg. Min.		Actual (inch.)	Dev. From normal
Alpena	37	22	+12.5	0.16	-0.54
Detroit	39	26	+8.0	0.63	-0.22
Flint	38	25	+9.5	0.33	-0.42
Lansing	38	25	+9.5	0.54	-0.25
Grand Rapids	37	25	+9.0	0.20	-0.58
Houghton Lake	34	20	+10.0	0.21	-0.46
Pellston	34	20	+13.0	0.12	-0.72
Sault Ste. Marie	30	15	+8.5	0.38	-0.43
Traverse City	35	25	+11.5	0.14	-0.63
Marquette	34	17	+7.5	0.96	+0.04

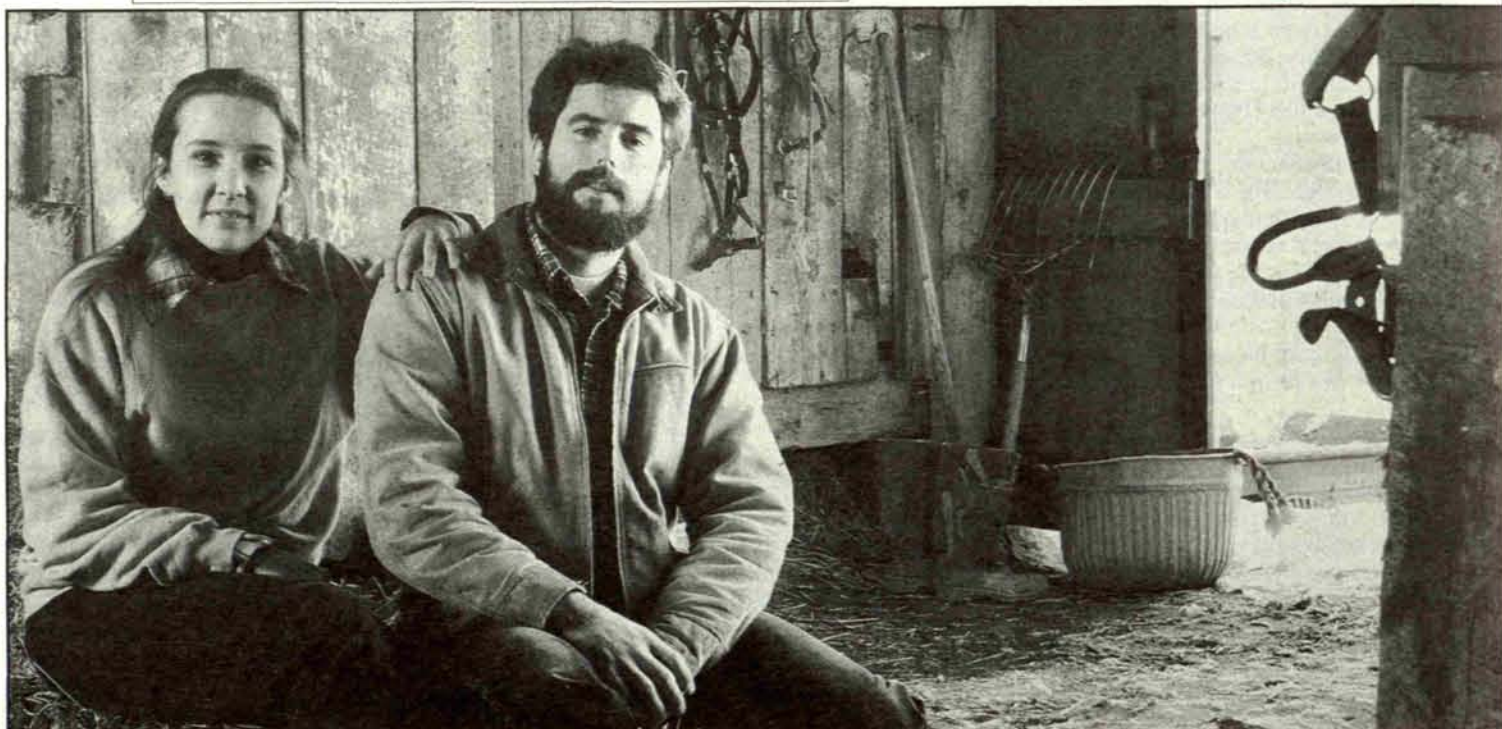
High Temp. = 57 at Alpena on 2/4/91
Low Temp. = -17 at Marquette on 2/1/91

February began with near record warmth and dry weather across Michigan, with maximum temperatures reaching the 50F degree mark in many locations during the first week. The above normal temperatures melted snowcover over southern and central areas and reduced winter hardiness of some fruits and winter crops. By February 11, however, seasonably cold temperatures returned to the state, followed by widespread snow and an intrusion of arctic air on the 15th. The arctic air subsequently produced large outbreaks of lake effect snow, with some areas of the central Upper Peninsula and extreme southwestern Lower Peninsula recording snow storm totals of 12-24 inches in a 24-hour period.

The outlook for the remainder of February is calling for a continuation of colder than normal temperatures. The latest 30-day outlook is calling for below normal temperatures and near normal precipitation for the period. Temperatures for the period normally reach or exceed the freezing mark across roughly the southeastern one-half of the state.

Jeff Andresen
Agricultural Meteorologist
Michigan State University

Weather



Choose Corn Insecticide Wisely

Corn growers thinking about using new sulfonylurea postemergence grass control this season should select their insecticide carefully. New herbicides such as Accent and Beacon have a significant phytotoxic interaction with Counter insecticide, an organophosphate, which can result in serious crop injury, according to Scott Rowe, Du Pont corn herbicides product development manager.

"Counter insecticides should not be used in the same growing season as these new sulfonylurea herbicides, regardless of whether the insecticide is used at planting or over-the-row at cultivation," says Rowe.

Rowe explains that the corn plant rapidly metabolizes a sulfonylurea herbicide to non-phytotoxic materials as soon as it gets in the plant. More than 90 percent of the "Accent" that enters a corn plant is gone within 24 hours of application. Rowe points out, however, that if an organophosphate insecticide is in the plant when you apply a herbicide like Accent or Beacon, the metabolism is inhibited, resulting in plant injury.



Phytotoxic interaction can lead to temporary discoloration of the leaves, chlorosis, leaf wrinkling, bending or death of the corn plant.

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"Ranch House Traders"

Gladwin County's Promotion and Education Committee kicked off a project called "Ranch House Traders" in cooperation with the Gladwin County Cooperative Extension Service and the Gladwin Farmer's Co-op Elevator. The project consists of weekly 6:30 a.m. breakfast meetings open to everyone and includes a guest speaker to "keep our farmers up-to-date on anything that concerns them."

Those items have drawn farmers from five other counties and has included speakers on issues such as taxes, market analysis, farm finance outlook, management tips, deer block permits, legislative updates, pesticide safety and containment and an ASCS spokesman on the new farm bill.

Jim Hilker of MSU's Ag Economics Department met with the "Ranch House Traders" January 30. The meetings are scheduled every Wednesday, through March 27, at the Ranch House Restaurant located on M-30 near Beaverton, in Gladwin county.

Banks Take Matter of Salvation In Hand

The nation's banking industry is proposing a plan to save itself from government intervention by contributing the money needed to keep its regulatory agency solvent.

The banks are willing to contribute \$10 billion over two years to avoid taxpayer bailout of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which regulates the banks and rescues those that fail.

With the plan, which requires FDIC approval, the bankers are hoping it will create a more friendly atmosphere in Congress for expanded bank powers to do business across state lines and to enter into sales of securities and insurance.

The Bush administration and Congress, already involved in bailing out the savings and loan industry, are apparently willing to let the banks handle their own rescue operation, according to a recent *Chicago Sun-Times* article.

"Schuette" - continued from page 1

Q. Is the Food Safety Council still a part of the overall food safety effort at MDA?

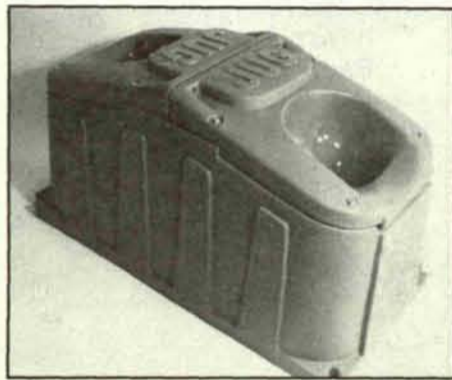
A. I think the concept is tremendous, when you can bring a wide variety of groups together to discuss an issue. The council has gone through an adjustment period in terms of what its specific goal and objectives ought to be in the 1990s. The food safety council provides recommendations; they're not a policy setting committee.

Q. What is the status of the Michigan Seal of Quality program?

A. We take special pride in Michigan for our products. In the global society in which we live, we can stamp Michigan all over our products. It's a great idea. The question is, how do you do that with limited funds? It's not that these things aren't important, but they have altered priorities in the environment in which we live today.

Q. What will be the role of MDA in the Livestock Initiative?

A. This is a joint effort with MSU and other concerned agri-leaders. We want to help, whether it's providing positive comments to the Legislature, or providing private individuals to work with MSU. The Animal Livestock Initiative ties right in with Right-to-Farm. If we're going to invest \$67 million for livestock production, we need to make sure our management practices are in keeping for growth of that industry. We are certainly there in terms of helping to implement policies that permit agricultural growth in Michigan.



The JUG, Noland System's revolutionary new Drinking Station for large animals, is designed for both water quality and energy conservation, using the principles of thermo energy. The unique "draw-tube" circulates the water, without moving parts, keeping a constant water temperature in all weather. The "draw-tube" also allows the animal to drink naturally while keeping out debris and algae, according to the manufacturer. The JUG has a sledge hammer-tough plastic body, one or two bowl option, easily-adjustable water level, and optional low-watt heating element (about \$8 a year to operate). For more information, contact Wes Blanchard, sales manager, Noland Systems, Inc., at 1-800-247-0037.

G.P.I. — The Most For Your Dollar

Tuscola County farmer Leroy Schluckebier cash crops over a 1,000 acres near Richville, raising corn, soys, dry beans and small grains. In addition, Leroy is Tuscola County Farm Bureau's Coordinator for the Group Purchasing, Inc. (GPI) program, developing a \$56,575 steel replacement business through eight county vendors in 1990.



According to GPI Operations Manager Bob Harms, Tuscola County has experienced an 81 percent growth in steel sales of tillage, cutting and roller chain parts in the last three years. Leroy attributes that phenomenal growth to a solid product line that meets or exceeds original equipment manufacturer specifications, a solid warranty program from GPI and tremendous savings to Farm Bureau members.

"We started this service-to-member-only program because some replacement parts were overpriced," says Leroy. "Savings are substantial during our winter and summer sales, when product is 20 percent off list."

According to Leroy, the warranty is a great sales tool, but seldom used because of the quality product line from suppliers such as Weiss, Kondex and HKK Roller Chain.

"We've sold hundreds of mold-boards, and have never had to warranty one," says Leroy. "Yet, I've had members talk about major manufacturers having to warranty literally hundreds of the same type of mold-board. In fact, our suppliers tend to be on the cutting edge of technology, which is another good selling point for us. We aren't reluctant to promote the quality because of that."

Leroy points to the HKK roller chain as a prime example of advanced technology. The roller's solid bushing has increased the life of the product another 30 percent over previous design. Says Leroy, "From what customers have been telling me, that claim holds true. HKK makes their bushings out of solid steel, instead of rolled steel, resulting in a seamless roller that keeps dirt out of critical wear points."

Is there room for growth in the GPI program? Ask Leroy and he'll give you a resounding yes! "So many members don't seem to be taking advantage of the savings that are generated with this program," says Leroy. "Once members have been exposed

to this program, they come back year after year, testifying to the success of the program." **Call 1-800-292-2680, ext. 2015 for program information.**

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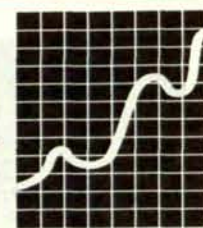
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6

MARKETS



FARM BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Seasonal Commodity Price Trends (long term)

Wheat	↑
Corn	→
Soybeans	↑
Hogs	TP
Cattle	TP

Index: ↑ = Higher Prices; ↓ = Lower Prices; TP= Topping; BT= Bottoming; ? = Unsure

Soybeans

The soybean figures in the prospective plantings report and the subsequent supply demand report issued February 11 were slightly bearish for the soy complex. The USDA revised the estimated 1990-91 soybean carryout upward again, this time to 320 million bushels, a 20 million bushel increase with 15 million of that increase coming from lower exports and the remaining five from a smaller crush estimate. Planting intentions also came in above trade expectations at 58.5 million acres, up 715,000 acres from 1990.

Plantings are down 12-15 percent in Brazil and down marginally in Argentina. With Argentina cutting export tax rates, their currency dropping sharply and farm finances under pressure in both countries, they will hold fewer soybean stocks. South America will be less competitive next fall. The tax cuts may make Argentine farmers stronger sellers from storage for the next few weeks.

Cattle

The annual USDA Cattle Report, which provides an inventory of all cattle and calves on farms and ranches as of January 1, was released February 4. Inventory as of January 1 was up 1 percent from a year ago, but final numbers for 1989 and 1990 were revised downward by over a million head each. In addition, final estimates of the 1990 calf crop were lowered from 1990 midyear estimates.

The bottom line is that the supply of cattle is tighter than had been reported for the past couple of years. There are still sufficient numbers on feed, however, and betting against the USDA numbers could backfire.

Watch for a potential shift in market focus. With the recession receiving more attention and with consumer belt tightening well underway, the time may be rapidly approaching when a shift toward demand fundamentals becomes noticeable. Very strong bullish trends are typically associated with tight supply fundamentals, while bearish trends are more often associated with demand problems.

Corn

USDA's preliminary 1991 plantings report, at 77.5 million acres, was at the high end of pre-release estimates and a three million acre increase over 1990. The increase is negative for new crop prices for the near-term but doesn't necessarily alter the outlook for higher spring prices. This report indicates that government program participation may be down more sharply than expected. A break in new crop bids can certainly change those plans.

Lower set-aside, 7.5-10.0 percent, is the main reason for increased acreage. Lower participation in the set-aside and 0/92 programs will also contribute to increased plantings. Flexibility to plant other crops, particularly soybeans, will offset a portion of the increase.

Under the new farm bill, in addition to set aside, 15 percent of base acreage will not receive deficiency payments, but the acreage can be planted to corn or any other crops except fruit and vegetables. An additional 10 percent can also be flexed but corn deficiency payments are sacrificed. Look for some alternative crops on the 15 percent Nonpaid Flexible Acres (NFA). However, alternative crops on Optional Flexible Acres (OFA) are much less attractive when competing with corn target prices.

The combination of fewer paid acres and a substantially lower projected deficiency payment -- \$.58 vs. \$.90 in 1990 -- makes 0/92 a nonstarter. As a result, acreage enrolled in 0/92 should be down from 3.9 million acres in 1990.

USDA JANUARY 1991 CATTLE INVENTORY REPORT

	1991	1990	Percent Change
-Million head-			
All Cattle and Calves	99.436	98.162	+1
Cows and Heifers that have calved	43.779	43.353	+1
Beef	33.620	33.200	+1
Dairy	10.159	10.153	Unch.
Heifers 500 lbs. plus			
Beef Replacement	5.585	5.418	+3
Dairy Replacement	4.194	4.227	-1
Other Heifers	8.383	8.028	+4
Steers 500 lbs. plus	16.548	15.911	+4
Calves under 500 lbs.	18.720	19.931	-2
	1990	1989	
Calf Crop	39.879	40.102	-1

Hogs

While the wholesale hog and pork products markets have held up quite well thus far, concerns continue about demand for pork during the current U.S. economic recession.

Poultry and seafood were dominant features in U.S. supermarkets the past few weeks, while the prospects of active beef and pork features continued to be hampered by higher wholesale prices. Pork prices, especially hams, are expected to hold up during the Lenten season and traditionally strong Easter ham purchasing period.

Wheat

The USDA Planting Intentions Report for spring wheat, reported at 17.6 million acres, was within trade estimates and considered neutral. Total ending stocks were reduced slightly from the January report to 982 million bushels. We could see planted spring wheat below 17.6 million acres if producers opt for the 0/92 provision or decide to "flex" spring wheat acreage. If there is any place these options may look attractive, it's in spring wheat areas.

A huge world wheat crop dominates this year's wheat situation. U.S. soft red winter wheat was the only wheat crop that had production problems last year. Worldwide, the 1990 crop was huge--more than 10 percent above the previous record. Wheat use is very strong--no one is willing to store the big crop--but carryover is up sharply.

To deal with the U.S. wheat surplus, the Bush administration's fiscal year 1991-92 budget proposal includes a supplemental request for \$475 million additional funding for the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) for the current year and requested \$1.2 million total for 1992. Immediate additional funding is essential with 75 percent of current fiscal year EEP appropriations exhausted. Over 47 percent of U.S. wheat export sales during this marketing year have been through the EEP. Because of Soviet absence in the market and Chinese purchases outside the EEP program during the first six months of this year, EEP sales as a percentage of total U.S. sales are down compared to past years.

1991 FARM PROGRAM WORKSHEET*

	No Program		Basic ARP Program		Flex Acres		0/92 Program	
	Example (Corn)	Your farm	Example (Corn)	Your farm	Example (Corn to soybeans)	Your farm	Example (Corn)	Your farm
1 Base acres	---	---	100	---	100	---	100	---
2 Unpaid idled acres (ACR)	---	---	7.5	---	7.5	---	7.5	---
3 Normal flex acres, 15% of base	---	---	15	---	15	---	15	---
4 Optional flex acres, up to 10% of base	---	---	0	---	0	---	10	---
5 Acres for deficiency payment	---	---	77.5	---	77.5	---	62.1	---
6 Planted acres: Program crop	100	---	92.5	---	77.5	---	0	---
7 Planted acres: Flex crop	---	---	0	---	15	---	25	---
8 Conserving use acres for 0/92 (CU)**	---	---	---	---	---	---	67.5	---
9 Expected yield: Program crop	135	---	135	---	135	---	135	---
10 ASCS yield: Program crop	---	---	120	---	120	---	120	---
11 Expected price: Program crop	\$2.30	---	\$2.30	---	\$2.30	---	\$2.30	---
12 Crop value: Program crop (line 6x9x11)	\$31,050	---	\$28,721	---	\$24,064	---	\$0	---
13 Expected yield: Flex crop	---	---	40	---	40	---	40	---
14 Expected price: Flex crop	---	---	\$5.75	---	\$5.75	---	\$5.75	---
15 Crop value: Flex crop (line 7x13x14)	---	---	\$0	---	\$3,450	---	\$5,750	---
16 Expected yield: CU crop	---	---	---	---	---	---	15	---
17 Expected price: CU crop	---	---	---	---	---	---	\$8.00	---
18 Crop value: CU crop (line 8x16x17)	---	---	---	---	---	---	\$8,100	---
19 Expected deficiency payment/unit	---	---	\$0.58	---	\$0.58	---	\$0.58	---
20 Total deficiency payments (line 5x10x19)	---	---	\$5,394	---	\$5,394	---	\$4,322	---
21 Gross revenue (line 12+15+18+20)	\$31,050	---	\$34,115	---	\$33,908	---	\$18,172	---
22 Direct costs/acre: Program crop	\$160	---	\$160	---	\$160	---	\$160	---
23 Total direct costs: Program crop (6x22)	\$16,000	---	\$14,800	---	\$12,400	---	\$0	---
24 Direct costs/acre: Flex crop	---	---	\$75	---	\$75	---	\$75	---
25 Total direct costs: Flex crop (7x24)	---	---	\$0	---	\$1,125	---	\$1,875	---
26 Direct costs/acre: CU crop	---	---	---	---	---	---	\$60	---
27 Total direct costs: CU crop (8x26)	---	---	---	---	---	---	\$4,050	---
28 Idled land cost/acre	---	---	\$15	---	\$15	---	\$15	---
29 Total idled land cost (line 2x28)	---	---	\$113	---	\$113	---	\$113	---
30 Total direct costs (line 23+25+27+29)	\$16,000	---	\$14,913	---	\$13,638	---	\$6,038	---
31 Total net income (line 21-30)	\$15,050	---	\$19,203	---	\$19,270	---	\$12,135	---

* All figures in the examples are rounded to the nearest dollar. This worksheet does not account for the loss of deficiency payments if the \$50,000 payment limit is exceeded. You will need to reduce payments if applicable.
 ** Conserving use acres in the 0/92 program for 1991 may be planted to a minor oilseed (sunseed, flaxseed, mustard, canola, safflower, etc.) without the loss of deficiency payments.

Top Prices For Crop Insurance Announced

The USDA has announced the top prices that can be elected by farmers when purchasing multi-peril crop insurance. Policy holders choose different levels of coverage desired and pay premiums accordingly. The top price levels for this year are \$2.30 a bushel for corn, \$2.15 for grain sorghum and \$5.50 for soybeans. These would be the top prices for which losses determined in bushels could be converted into value of the insurance claim, the department said.

A number of agricultural banking industry surveys conducted last year indicated that up to 70 percent of farm operating loans were secured by crop insurance in many areas of the country, according to Eugene Gantz, president of the American Association of Crop Insurers. "Without crop insurance," Gantz said, "many operating loans would have been reduced by 50 percent."

Ruling Reversed on Canadian Pork Imports

The U.S. International Trade Commission has reversed its decision that imports of Canadian pork are harmful to the domestic pork industry. The reversal was in compliance with a January 22, 1991 ruling by the U.S.-Canada trade dispute settlement board under the bilateral free-trade agreement between the two countries.

The countervailing duty will be lifted as a result of the decision and Canadian pork exporters will be refunded some \$15 million in duties paid. Canada sells over \$300 million worth of pork in this country, or about 3 percent of total U.S. consumption.

Wheat and the Farmer-Owned Reserve

Farmers intend to enter 238.8 million bushels of wheat in the farmer owned-reserve, according to the USDA. The amount is well below the 300 million bushels the department had said it would allow into the reserve. The farmer-owned reserve (FOR) is basically an extension of the regular 9-month loan program. Farmers who signify their intention to do so may roll their wheat into the FOR once their regular loan expires.

Even in the reserve, wheat entered in the program is more accessible to the market under the 1990 farm law than previous reserves have been, now that farmers may redeem their loans for cash at any time without penalty. In past programs, the price had to rise above a certain level to trigger release from the reserve. Once the 27-month reserve contracts expire, producers are eligible for one six-month extension at the discretion of the USDA secretary.

Michigan Asparagus Growers Approve Referendum

Michigan asparagus growers have approved a proposal for an increase in assessments administered by the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board, according to the Michigan Department of Agriculture. A total of 285 ballots were cast in the referendum conducted by MDA from Jan. 7 through Jan. 18, 1991. Thirty-eight ballots were disqualified because they contained late postmarks, were incomplete, incorrectly filled out or did not meet production requirements, leaving a total of 247 valid ballots.

In voting, 54 percent, or 133 producers, representing 9,650,197 pounds (64 percent of total production) voted yes to increase the assessment rate from \$.005 per pound to \$.02 per pound, while 46 percent, or 114 producers, representing 5,467,856 pounds (36 percent of total production) voted no.

Law requires that more than 50 percent of the affected producers which represent more than 50 percent of the volume of asparagus must affirmatively approve the referendum for it to pass. Additional information may be obtained by contacting MDA's Center for Agricultural Innovation and Development at (517) 373-1058.

Potato Stocks Up 36 Percent

Potato growers in Michigan held 3 million hundredweight (cwt.) of potatoes on February 1, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. That's 36 percent above stocks a year earlier and represents 32 percent of 1990's fall crop production. Disappearance of the 1990 crop from harvest to February 1 totaled 6.2 million cwt. compared to 5.2 million cwt. a year earlier. Disappearance includes sales, shrink and waste. Of total stocks on hand, 63 percent were whites, 34 percent russets and 3 percent reds.

Fall potato stocks on February 1, in the 15 major states are estimated at 154 million cwt., 7 percent above last year's level. Potatoes remaining in storage accounted for 46 percent of the 1990 crop equal to that of a year ago. Disappearance of potatoes from the 15 major states so far this season is a record 182 million cwt., up 6 percent from a year ago and up 18 percent from the 1988 crop.

USDA Low Fat Beef Goes to Schools

Checkoff-funded research to develop lowfat ground beef has resulted in the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the USDA to announce the special purchase of 237,600 pounds of beef patties for use in the national school lunch program. The pilot purchase of low-fat ground beef is part of a program designed to find a low-fat beef patty with acceptable flavor, tenderness, juiciness and texture.

Daniel D. Haley, Administrator of AMS, said five companies submitted a total of 13 technical proposals in response to USDA's solicitation. Of the 13, six proposals from three firms were found acceptable. Product submitted by two of the three acceptable firms were funded by research monies from producer checkoffs.

The selected patties were shipped to specified schools this month, with an evaluation to follow. If those results prove favorable, a decision will be made on additional purchases of low-fat ground beef patties for the 1991-92 school year.

GEHL Company Offers New Finance Plan

A new equipment financing program will enable farmers to purchase needed equipment this winter, without making a payment until the end of the busy summer season. The program, called Freedom Financing, was introduced February 1, by the GEHL Company and includes two delay payment options:

- No payments until Aug. 1, 1991, followed by a 7.9 percent APR for up to 30 months or;
- No payments until Oct. 1, 1991, followed by a 12.9 percent APR for up to 48 months.

In addition, the Freedom Financing program has two options that offer no finance charges. Purchasers can select no finance charge for 12 months with reduced payments followed by a 9.9 APR for up to 36 months; or select no finance charge for 18 months.

Farm Program Software Available

Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. is making a software program available to producers around the country who are facing changes in the new U.S. farm program. Developed and distributed exclusively by Pioneer, the Farm Program Option Viewer software helps producers weigh their acreage reduction alternatives under the U.S. farm program.

The software provides bottomline results in net profits or losses for a farm under various levels of participation. The 1991 Farm Program Option Viewer is available free through local Pioneer sales representatives, and operates on any MS-DOS compatible personal computer with at least 512K RAM and DOS Version 2.1 or greater. Producers unsure of who their local representative is may call toll-free 1-800-338-5878 to obtain the name.



Improve Your Bottom Line!

Spring Steel Sale

Group Purchasing 10% Off on Tillage, Cutting Parts and Roller Chain

March 1 — March 17

NH	9'	800-042	\$76.05	\$69.26
JD	9'	800-374	\$116.10	\$104.49
IH	9'	800-399	\$71.23	\$64.11
JD	15'	800-312	\$188.18	\$151.36
AC	15'	800-221	\$141.39	\$127.25
IH	15'	800-301	\$183.06	\$164.75

PLAIN DISC BLADE	20' 9 ga.	\$14.30	\$12.87
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#40	\$1.75	\$1.57 per foot
#50	\$2.30	\$2.07 " "
#60	\$3.11	\$2.80 " "
#80	\$5.54	\$4.99 " "

CC-124 TWISTED CHISEL 4" SLASH POINT	\$12.14	\$10.93
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SO-22 CHISEL SPIKE	\$24.46	\$22.01
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MOLDBOARD	\$50.02	\$53.03
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DOUBLE POINT	\$2.04	\$2.65
A-50-UVX-FERTILIZER KNIFE	\$19.60	\$12.15
123 TWISTED CHISEL	\$7.94	\$7.15

WC-134 DOUBLE POINT	\$2.10	\$1.89
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VIBROTINE	\$24.46	\$22.01
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LW SHARE (WITH BOLTS)	16'	\$10.30	\$9.35
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Think Spring Think Savings
Think Farm Bureau Group Purchasing!

Contact Your Local Vendor or County Farm Bureau Office or
MFB Group Purchasing at 1-800-292-2680, ext. 2015

8

Forest Resource Assessment Underway

A new study, initiated to assess the sustainability of forests resources in the lake states of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, will focus on ecological and economic factors, according to the 14-member steering committee meeting.

The assessment is a project of the Lake States Forestry Alliance, a group formed by the governors of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota in 1987. The alliance is charged with promoting cooperation between all forest interests -- industry, regulatory agencies, conservationists and land owners -- to insure that future forestry resources will be available.

The assessment, directed by former state of Michigan forester Dr. Henry Webster, will address questions in the next three to four years regarding productivity of forests as well as demands placed on them and their capacity to contribute to economic development, employment rates and the quality of life in the region.

Could You Respond To A Farm Emergency?

What would you do if you were first on the scene of a serious farm accident? The victim's fate can hinge on your actions during the initial minutes of the accident. Learning these simple steps can save a life:

- If more than one uninjured person is present, one should go for help and the other should tend to the victim. If you're alone, stabilizing the victim should be your first priority. Leaving an untended victim alone for even a few minutes can be disastrous. Assess the situation and tend to the victim before going for help.
- If the victim is caught in machinery, disengage the power take-off and shut off the engine. Do not attempt to extricate someone caught in a machine; doing so could worsen the injury. When calling for help, tell authorities that an extrication will be involved so that they can bring the proper equipment.
- If the victim is bleeding, it's critical that you stop the bleeding immediately. Take a cloth or strip of clothing, press it over the wound, and apply direct pressure. Do not use a tourniquet, except as a last resort. Completely shutting off the blood flow could result in irreversible tissue damage.
- If the victim is not breathing, and you do not detect a pulse, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). If oxygen intake and blood flow are not re-established soon, brain damage and death are inevitable.
- If a body part has been severed, locate it so that it can be cared for and possibly reattached by medical personnel.
- Cover the victim with a blanket to keep him or her warm. Try to reassure and calm the victim, but do not offer food or drink.



From Farm Bureau Insurance

- After bleeding has stopped and the victim seems stable and as comfortable as possible, go for help if no one has already done so.
- Have emergency numbers posted by every phone, including the numbers of your local EMS rescue squad, fire, and police. Dial them directly rather than going through the operator. Be prepared to give clear directions and don't hang up until told to do so. Give them your phone number so they can call you back if necessary. Children too young to dial a regular number can be taught to call the operator to report an emergency.

NOW Even More Reasons to Use Member Travel Services

Ice Capades - Wednesday, March 13, 1991 Cost \$59 per person

We have planned a lovely downtown dinner evening before our coach drives you to the door of the Joe Lewis Arena. Then we have a great evening of entertainment ahead of us as we enjoy lavish costumes and spectacular production numbers performed on ice by world class skaters. Clowns, special ice dancing and the music provide a night to remember!

Shippshewana - Saturday, April 13, 1991 Cost \$69 per person

After a pleasant and relaxing drive, we'll arrive at the Dutchman Essenhouse in Middlebury, Indiana. Here we will be treated to a marvelous Amish-style lunch. Bring your appetite and save room for homemade pie! After lunch, we will take a short drive to the famous Shippshewana outdoor flea market where you can find many treasures, new or antique!

Holland Tulip Festival - Thursday, May 16, 1991 Cost \$69 per person

The festival will be in full swing today as we visit Windmill Island and Dutch Village. We will view the parade from comfortable lawn chairs, enjoy our included dinner at the Old School House and much more.

1991 WINTER/SPRING MFB GROUP TOURS

MARCH -- Caribbean Cruising, from \$1145 per person, based on double occupancy, plus port charges

8 days and 7 nights aboard the "Fun Ship" *Celebration* • Roundtrip air from Lansing or Detroit • On-board accommodations • All meals, entertainment and activities while on board • Airport/pier transfers, baggage handling

APRIL -- Waikiki Holiday, \$779 per person, based on double occupancy, mid week rates

9 days, 7 nights of sunshine in paradise • Round trip air from Detroit • Hotel accommodations at the Waikiki Hobron • Airport/pier transfers, baggage handling • Fresh flower lei greeting upon arrival

APRIL -- Las Vegas Weekend, from \$339 per person, based on double occupancy

4 days and 3 nights in the fast lane! • Roundtrip air charter from Detroit • Hotel accommodations • Airport/hotel/airport transfers, baggage handling • Taxes and Vegas Discount Book.

JUNE -- Mackinaw Island Lilac Festival, June 12-14, \$279 per person

Experience the magic of Mackinaw Island, surrounded by the dazzling blue waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron • Spectacular accommodations at Mission Point, the largest resort property located on the Island's southeastern shore • Millions of fragrant lilac flowers will be in bloom • Enjoy a host of interesting stops, lakeview accommodations, daily breakfasts, a dinner with a full choice menu, carriage tours and much more!

Call **1-800-354-4272** or check the box by tour(s) of interest to you; clip this page and send to MFB Travel Service, 1000 Victors Way, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108, to receive more information by return mail.

Are you trained in CPR or first aid? Adults and older children who work on your farm should be. Proper training can save a limb or a life. Contact your local hospital, fire department, American Red Cross, your rescue unit, or high school continuing education program, for more information before starting another busy season.

Toxoplasmosis - An Economic Problem for Sheep Owners

Sheep producers can drastically improve the overall health and financial standing of their flock through the religious practice of toxoplasmosis control methods, says Dr. J.P. Dubey of the USDA's Agricultural Research Center at Beltsville, Maryland.

"Toxoplasmosis is everywhere, but that's understandable when you consider how resistant the disease is and how easily it spreads," said Dubey. "Cats are the main carrier, and that's a monumental problem in itself. Cats are everywhere and diagnostic tests have revealed that at least one-third of all cats in the U.S. carry toxoplasmosis."

The disease is spread to sheep when their food, water or grazing areas come in contact with cat feces. Once in the sheep's system, it becomes the number one reason for spontaneous abortion, making the disease a major economic issue for producers, according to Dubey.

Although it's impossible to totally eliminate toxoplasmosis, there are steps you can take to reduce the frequency and range of contamination. Dubey's number one rule is to keep cats out of feed barns and feed areas.

Dubey suggests wearing gloves while handling dead lambs after a spontaneous abortion and also suggests submitting the lamb for diagnosis. Exposed ewes do develop immunity to the disease after the initial exposure.

According to Dubey, the disease is actually spread by birds, rabbits, and small rodents that female cats often bring back to their kittens. For that reason, he suggests controlling the number of cats on a farm, especially females.